

Teachers' Awareness And Usage Of Non-Violent Strategies For The Maintenance Of Discipline In Nigerian Secondary Schools: A Situational Analysis

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ABSTRACT

This study sought to determine teachers' level of awareness and usage of non-violent strategies/interventions for the maintenance of discipline in secondary schools in Anambra State, Nigeria. Corporal punishment has become an unwritten sine qua non for the maintenance of school discipline - often the first thought that comes to the minds of teachers in treating acts of indiscipline and deviance. From the Nnewi Education Zone, comprising four local government areas (LGAs), 200 teachers were selected for descriptive survey out of 996 teachers. Stratified random sampling was used such that the schools were stratified into co-educational and single-sex schools, and from each randomly selected school, 10 teachers were selected. Two research questions and four null hypotheses guided this study, and questionnaire was used to collect data. The mean was used to answer the research questions and t-test for the hypothesis at the 0.05 level of significance. The study recommended in-service training for teachers in educational psychology, particularly behaviour modification methods, parental input and interest in school discipline as well as the cessation of corporal punishment among others.

Keywords: Discipline; Teachers' Awareness; Non-Violent Strategies; Secondary Schools

INTRODUCTION

*A*s a service-oriented organization, the school serves as a preparatory ground for the grooming and development of the minds that would in future fathom a country's socio-economic puzzles and ensuring societal longevity, this the school does through empowerment and certification (Temitayo, Nayaya & Lukman, 2013). According to Alhassan (2013), education is expected at any level to influence the behaviour of those experiencing it. Education, Alhassan continues, is influenced in turn by physical, emotional, intellectual, psychological, technological, social and economic changes occurring contiguously around the learner's environment. Due to the arduous task presented to teachers in the form of child socialization and education, it is pertinent that while on the task, orderliness should exist and persist in the school climate. This orderliness can be achieved and maintained through the enthronement of discipline in schools.

Discipline has always been one of the major problems faced by school administrators; hence rules and regulations are developed and presented to students in order to avail them of the dos and don'ts of the school beforehand (Temitayo, Nayaya & Lukman, 2013). In Nigerian secondary schools, once these rules and regulations are made and the students availed of it, the onus is on students to abide by and be guided by such rules, flouting of which is tantamount to indiscipline and attracts sanctions of varying degrees. Despite the foregoing, students' indiscipline levels are on the rise in Nigerian secondary schools and appropriate sanctions are usually applied by of school authorities. Temitayo, Nayaya and Lukman (2013) have it that students' classroom misconduct interferes with teaching and learning and is believed to be a precursor to later school dropout and similar negative social outcomes; hence students' behavioral problems are also believed to be a leading cause of teacher stress and attrition.

Alhassan (2000) and Egwunyenga (2009) both explained the concept of discipline as training that ensures that an individual develops orderly conduct, self-control as well as self-direction. Alhassan posits that discipline binds individuals together in order to enable them to work, live and harmoniously interact with one another beneficially. Peretomode (1998) equally has it that discipline entails respect for self and respect for others. In the school setting Adesina (1980) explains school discipline to be a situation in which students are taught respect for school authority, obedience to school rules and regulations as well as the maintenance of established standard behaviour. Lukman and Hamadi (2014) see school discipline as an essential element of school administration since discipline is a mode of life according to society's rules, the violations of which are questionable and punishable. Self discipline has been explained as a willingness to accept laid down rules and regulations as well as the ability to act in accordance with societal expectations, implying that a self disciplined individual should be able to control his inner riotous tendencies which are forces that drive disobedience and disorderly conduct (Joseph, 2010; Temitayo, Nayaya & Lukman, 2013).

Pager (1994) reported that in Southwest Nigeria, educators in one school indicated high levels of absenteeism, indolence, truancy, bullying and subversion of learner achievement assessments as the major highlights of indiscipline in that school. Other identified examples of indiscipline in schools include dress code violation, disrespect for constituted authority, fighting, use of profane language, destruction of school property and the school plant, thieving, leaving the school compound unpermitted and acts of insubordination (Donnelly, 2000; Rosen, 1997). Alidzulwi (2000) noted that severe indiscipline has been experienced in secondary schools, adding that secondary schools have evolved into battlegrounds where dangerous weapons such as guns lie side by side with pens and notebooks in students' schoolbags.

In a Kenyan study design that could best be described as eclectic since it involved questionnaires, interviews, and document analysis guide (N=3,650), Simatwa (2012) discovered that many infractions occurred in Kenyan secondary schools and principals adopted varying degrees of sanctions as disciplinary measures. These sanctions included kneeling, caning, expulsion, suspension, punishment, reprimand, written self-commitment and counseling among others, all of which were environment-contingent. Simatwa reported that there were unabated violent incidents of students' unrest in secondary schools, leading to loss of lives and property. In March 2001 there was a ban on corporal punishment in the country's schools which gave impetus to alternative discipline control forms such as counseling, kneeling on rough surfaces, detention and verbal reprimand. Prefects interviewed by Simatwa (50%) however, regarded counseling as a waste of time and ineffective in curtailing acts of indiscipline since it was not punitive, without corporal reminders of the offence that attracted the sanction.

Discipline remains a most crucial aspect of education, for Mbiti (1973) asserted that school and home discipline should be geared at producing young people who will emerge as responsible adults, able to make decisions and accept the consequences of such decisions for good or for bad.

Temitayo, Nayaya and Lukman (2013) describe school violence as a more severe form of indiscipline. Violent conduct in school entails one or more of the following:

- Sexual harassment against females
- Extortion of valuables from fellow students and sometimes teachers
- Blackmail, theft, and vandalism
- Verbal violence, including name-calling and heckling
- Planned violence, with or without weapons

Causes of Disciplinary Problems

Temitayo, Nayaya and Lukman (2013) equally identified causes of disciplinary problems, which include: parental/home factor, socio-political and economic factors, school environment, curricular lapses and peer group influences.

The Peer Group

Eating habits, fashion, mannerisms and values are usually adapted by children from their peers. The factor seems to matter the most to them, albeit that age and personality of the child interplay to determine the extent of peer group influence on him or her. Adolescent problematic behaviour is usually traceable to peer influence in that the peer group demands blind conformity to norms as part of the in-group or the child is shoved towards the out-group. The in-thing is usually what a child's peers are doing, whether or not it is deleterious to his or her wellbeing, and this usually culminates in conflict with teachers and parents.

Parental/Home Factor

Often times, parents shelve their primary responsibility of raising morally sound offspring, expecting the teachers to make up for their own shortcomings in child raising. Child interest in academics is often times a function of acquiescence towards the educational process right from the home as the primary agent of socialization. Alidzulwi (2000) noted that poor results, high dropout rates and lack of school discipline is a function of lack of parental involvement in their wards' education. Also, if parents fail to teach their children discipline at home, there is ever possibility of the child being a problem to the school authority. Single parenthood, negative influence of television, differences in value systems between the home and the school are some of the elements of the parental/home factor affecting school discipline (Temitayo, Nayaya & Lukman, 2013).

School Environment

If parents, staff and students display mutual respect for one another, there will be a safe and supportive school environment for the benefit of the students. Accordingly, every player in the school environment must understand the behavioural expectations and limitations and live up to them or face the consequences should these standards be unmet. Every student deserves to be treated with dignity and fairness in a bullying and intimidation-free environment; hence school rules should provide for good conduct with power to enforce these rules using discipline, punishment or vide any other means deemed necessary for the good of the students and of the school (Temitayo, Nayaya & Lukman, 2013; Terry, 2001). A lawless school community thus engenders undesired behaviour and discipline problems since disrespect and rule flouting will be the order of the day.

The Curriculum

If the school curriculum does not engender the development and appreciation of personal worth, neither does it promote societal goals. Learners are likely to engage in deviant behaviour within and without the school environment. According to Besag in Temitayo, Nayaya and Lukman (2013), learners resort to taking matters in their own hands if they find the curriculum boring and irrelevant. It thus suffices to say that the curriculum should be stimulating enough to positively distract learners from negative engagements. The curriculum must recognize and promote learner interests, community needs and give room for co-curricular activities that would keep students busy.

Socio-Political and Economic Factors

Fear and confusion on the part of teachers of infringing on the rights of students deter them from enforcing discipline because some of these students are born to the high and mighty, often spoiled children in their own rights. Thus when over-emphasis is laid on the rights of students, the students begin to downplay the authority of teachers and administrators, particularly if their own parents are higher placed in society than the teachers. Children experiencing social alienation are often found behaving deviant in reaction (defence mechanism) to rejection and ridicule stemming from social absurdities such as stereotypes.

Practices in Maintaining School Discipline and for School Behaviour Modification

Several practices and methods are deployed in schools for the management of discipline problems, depending on the context of the problem and contiguity with other factors. Bell (1995) highlighted several means of achieving school discipline including: teacher effectiveness training, positive approach (teacher-student mutual

respect and bounds creation), suspension or temporary exclusion, detention, expulsion, deprivation of privileges, moral punishment, and rewards. Nakpodia (2010, 2012) listed methods used in Nigerian schools for correcting indiscipline and these include: the use of the cane, spanking with the hand or slippers, slapping, knocking the head with the knuckle and causing students to kneel down on hard surfaces, all of which are acts of corporal punishment.

Corporal punishment can instigate school avoidance and encourage truancy as well as the imbibing of more negative characteristics from fellow actors in the truancy drama (Unachukwu & Nwasor, 2014). Corporal punishment alone cannot remediate behavioural inconsistencies in schools as current research (Gershoff, 2002; Nakpodia, 2010; Nwosu, Nwasor & Ndubuisi, 2013) has begun to lash out at it as not being the ultimate deterrent for bad behaviour. In developed countries, corporal punishment has become the least favoured strategies for maintaining school discipline. Umezinwa and Elendu (2012) have it that corporal punishment in attempting to forestall counterproductive school behaviour, has led to somatic problems, anxiety and depression on the part of students, thus becoming a counterproductive measure. Therefore in the modification of undesired behaviours in the school setting, other measures have come up, some as suggestions, others as policies that have been implemented.

Bechuke and Debeila (2012) in their submissions towards the control of indiscipline and behaviour modification in South African schools, these schools put forward the Choice Theory. The Choice Theory entails getting the student to be aware of his or her responsibility to make decisions having to do with his or her school behaviour. Once the student has recognized his capacity to make responsible choices and be accountable for his or her behaviour, he or she is likely to strive to maintain a likeable image that can aid self-affirmation by respecting laid down rules and regulations. Since according to the study by Nwosu, Nwasor and Ndubuisi (2013), flogging (corporal punishment) was perceived to have minimal positive effect of adolescents' adherence to laid down rules, academic work and student-teacher relationship, it becomes pertinent to evolve and practice other forms of discipline assurance in schools.

In the United States of America, the Zero Tolerance policy has been in place for over twenty years and has dominated the discourse for school discipline (American Psychological Association, 2008). The assumption of the Zero Tolerance policy is that when students who engage in disruptive behaviour are removed from others, the tendency of further behavioural infractions from other students will be minimized and a better academic climate created for those who remain in schools (Ewing, 2000; Public Agenda, 2004). Zero Tolerance became a popular ideology in the 90s, adopted by many schools and entailing the application of predetermined consequences, often severe and punitive, regardless of behaviour gravity and situational context (Skiba & Rausch, 2006). No single definition subsists for Zero Tolerance yet; its practice depends on the semantic attached to it by schools that subscribe to the ideology, thus it is cumbersome determining the prevalence of the policy in American schools. Based on this policy, a 10-year-old girl was expelled from school after handing an apple-peeling knife used by her mother and accidentally left in her schoolbag to her teacher, the reason being that she was in possession of a dangerous weapon (American Psychological Association, 2008).

Alternative Interventions for Maintaining Discipline and Desired School Behaviour

For the control of undesired behaviour in schools as well as maintaining discipline, the counseling perspective comes in handy to avoid the scarring effects of corporal punishment. Egbochukwu (2012) hinted that there could be psychological factors affecting school discipline since the offending student might have come from homes where psychological balance is non-existent; hence the acting out of deviant behaviours as a vent for pent-up emotions. This is where behaviour modification comes in as a universal strategy to cope with indiscipline, anxiety, stress and other undesirables in schools. Behaviour modification assumes that observable and measurable behaviours are good targets for change, and that all behaviour follows a set of consistent rules which have to be applied properly and carefully to ensure success at the process of behaviour modification; it is the systematic application of learning principles to alter human behaviours (Ekennia, 1995; Mather and Goldstein, 2001).

Okeke (1989) recommended strategies for modifying behaviour in schools, which have been used though to a minimal extent. These include: systematic desensitization emanating from models of classical conditioning, rational emotive behaviour therapy, modeling, vicarious reinforcement programmes, self-efficacy, token economy, peer reinforcement, positive and negative reinforcement. According to Onyeachu (2010), colourful instructional

materials used by teachers to decorate classrooms, posters and photographs of deviants and miscreants who became dropouts were found to deter students from academically deleterious behaviours in Isiukwuato Local Government Area of Abia State, Nigeria. In the same area of study, appointment to prefectship positions, individual and group counseling and moral instruction were also found to deter would-have-been miscreants and to stop a good number of those with maladaptive behaviours from continuing tarnishing the names of their schools.

Egbochukwu (2012) suggested behaviour therapy whose general therapeutic goals include the identification of problem behaviours, creating new learning opportunities and experiences and the expansion of behavioural responses available to the counselee. Part of behaviour therapy techniques include: systematic desensitization, modeling, homework, activity scheduling and role playing (for example prefectship), some of which have been scientifically proven to be effective in treating behaviours requiring modification. Egbochukwu also suggested cognitive behaviour therapy, which is insight-focused and entails recognizing and changing negative and maladaptive patterns of thought in clients' minds. Egbochukwu posits that once cognitive change has been instituted in a student, the behavioural change would naturally follow as individuals act out what they think. Truancy, conflict, absenteeism, lateness, pilfering and a host of other student vices can be treated this way along with anxiety, stress and depression.

Unachukwu and Nwasor (2014) recommended the mainstreaming of peace education to foster cooperativeness within the school setting and the ultimate reduction in deviance. Uncooperative attitude, according to Unachukwu and Nwasor, is highlighted through school conflict such as cultism, general indiscipline and other behavioural inconsistencies. According to Ogunyemi and Adetoro (2013), peace education is a veritable catch-them-young tool that can help minimize the spirit of intolerance that precipitates school conflict. The absence of school peace culture has reached such gargantuan proportions that neither the threat of corporal punishment nor the actual use of it can successfully remediate the situation. For those who have piled up offences that require corporal punishment, it could lead to school avoidance, thus the inculcation of peace-oriented values is suggested by Unachukwu and Nwasor as key to school discipline and the maintenance of academic and social harmony in schools.

Having highlighted strategies in place and those that should serve as non-violent deterrents to deleterious behaviour in schools, the researchers developed the following research questions to guide this study:

1. What is the level of awareness of non-violent discipline control strategies among teachers in the selected secondary schools?
2. What is the level of usage of non-violent discipline control strategies among teachers in the selected secondary schools?

The following hypotheses also guided the study, tested at 95% confidence level:

1. There is no significant difference in the level of awareness of non-violent discipline control strategies between teachers in single-sex schools and their coeducational secondary school counterparts.
2. There is no significant difference in the level of usage of non-violent discipline control strategies between teachers in single-sex schools and their coeducational secondary school counterparts.
3. There is no significant difference in the level of awareness of non-violent discipline control strategies between teachers in urban schools and their rural secondary school counterparts.
4. There is no significant difference in the level of usage of non-violent discipline control strategies between teachers in urban schools and their rural secondary school counterparts.

METHODS

This study adopted the descriptive survey design. From a population of 996 teachers in the four Local Government Areas (LGAs) that make up the Nnewi Education Zone in Anambra State, Nigeria, a sample size of 200 was arrived at. The sampling technique adopted was stratified random sampling such that the schools were stratified into co-educational and single-sex schools. From each randomly selected school, 10 teachers were selected. The distribution of the number of schools was such that 12 schools were selected from the coeducational while 8 schools

were selected from the single-sex schools, representing 60%-40% stratification of the sampling of the teachers according to their school type. A 20 item questionnaire was developed by the researchers for the study, consisting of two parts, A and B; part A comprised the personal details of the respondents, with part B having two clusters representing awareness level and usage of non-violent discipline control strategies in secondary schools. The questionnaire was rated on a 4-point scale, weighted such that the highest score could be 40 while the lowest score would be 10. The research questions were answered using mean, while the hypotheses were answered using t-test at 0.05 level of significance. The decision was taken such that any score within the range of 10 and 25 will be regarded as low while 26 to 40 will be regarded as high. A t-value of above 1.96 will be rejected, while a t-value of below 1.96 will not be rejected.

RESULTS

Table 1. Mean response ratings on the level of awareness of non-violent discipline control strategies among teachers in the selected secondary schools.

Students' stereotype	N	Mean (\bar{X})	Standard deviation	Decision
Total	200	26.6650	4.79769	High

The findings from the analysis on Table 1 indicate that the teachers that make up the sample are aware of non-violent behaviour interventions for school discipline.

Table 2. Mean response ratings on the level of usage of non-violent discipline control strategies among teachers in the selected secondary schools

Students' stereotype	N	Mean (\bar{X})	Standard deviation	Decision
Total	200	26.1950	5.24926	High

The findings from the analysis on Table 2 indicate that the teachers that make up the sample utilize non-violent behaviour interventions for school discipline.

Table 3. Test for significant difference in the level of awareness of non-violent discipline control strategies between teachers in single-sex schools and their coeducational secondary school counterparts

School type	N	Mean (\bar{X})	Standard deviation	Df	t-cal	t-crit	Decision
Co-educational	120	27.5667	5.09693	198	3.337	1.96	Reject
Single-sex	80	25.3125	3.97012				

Table 3 indicated that there is significant difference in the level of awareness of non-violent measures of controlling discipline between teachers in single-sex schools and their coeducational school colleagues; hence the null hypothesis was rejected.

Table 4. Test for significant difference in the level of usage of non-violent discipline control strategies between teachers in single-sex schools and their coeducational secondary school counterparts

School type	N	Mean (\bar{X})	Standard deviation	Df	t-cal	t-crit	Decision
Co-educational	120	28.1000	4.70187	198	7.004	1.96	Reject
Single-sex	80	23.3375	4.72522				

Table 4 indicated that there is significant difference in the level of usage of non-violent measures of controlling discipline between teachers in single-sex schools and their coeducational school colleagues; hence the null hypothesis was rejected.

Table 5. Test for significant difference in the level of awareness of non-violent discipline control strategies between teachers in rural schools and their urban secondary school counterparts

School type	N	Mean (\bar{X})	Standard deviation	Df	t-cal	t-crit	Decision
Rural	70	27.5143	5.18846	198	1.848	1.96	Do not Reject
Urban	130	26.2077	4.52846				

Table 5 indicated that there is indeed no significant difference in the level of awareness of non-violent measures of controlling discipline between teachers in rural schools and their urban school colleagues; hence the null hypothesis was not rejected.

Table 6. Test for significant difference in the level of usage of non-violent discipline control strategies between teachers in rural and their urban secondary school counterparts

School type	N	Mean (\bar{X})	Standard deviation	Df	t-cal	t-crit	Decision
Rural	70	27.7714	4.86386	198	3.187	1.96	Reject
Urban	130	25.3462	5.27053				

Table 6 indicated that there is significant difference in the level of usage of non-violent measures of controlling discipline between teachers in rural schools and their urban school colleagues; hence the null hypothesis was rejected.

DISCUSSION

With mean ratings of 26.6650 and 26.1950, based on the benchmark of 26-40 accepted as indicative of awareness and usage of non-violent discipline interventions among the secondary school teachers studied, it does not really imply high level of usage in overall terms in that with the benchmark of 26 for positivity and 25 and below for negativity in rating, much needs to still be done in terms of awareness and usage of such interventions. Again, inasmuch as awareness and usage are determinable from the findings, there exists significant differences in levels of awareness and usage of non-violent discipline strategies among teachers in single-sex and coeducational secondary schools, thus the null hypotheses in this regard were rejected.

However, significant difference was not observed in the level of awareness of non-violent discipline strategies among teachers in rural and urban secondary schools; hence the null hypothesis was not rejected. Significant difference though existed in the level of usage of non-violent discipline strategies among teachers in single-sex and coeducational secondary schools. The null hypothesis was rejected accordingly.

RECOMMENDATIONS

From the foregoing, this study hereby recommends the following:

1. Training in educational psychology, guidance counseling or both should periodically be carried out in-service for teachers since the two semesters dedicated to school psychology do not seem to suffice for the handling of students in a dynamic world.
2. Behaviour modification strategies should be employed more often by teachers in order to minimize the negative impact of corporal punishment on students.
3. Parents should show more interest in the manner in which their children are disciplined in school in order that personal trait interferences on the part of teachers might not mar the goal of correction through tyrannical acts.
4. Principals should regularly inspect teachers to find out how they carry out discipline among their students with a view to advising them on better and less harmful ways of instilling discipline in children.
5. Peace education along with moral instruction should be intensified in secondary school to minimize undesired behaviours from being exhibited by students.

CONCLUSION

Students have to notice empathy on the part of teachers, even when errant, and possibly are told the consequences of repeating such errant acts in situations where they had not been pre-warned. Corporal punishment scars, maims and at times kills students and should be stopped in Nigerian schools. It is also clear that the teachers require further training in educational psychology and in counseling because in a dynamic world as ours, changing trends might elicit from students behaviours for which hitherto there was no existing remedy. The ability of peace

education to transform individuals and as a preventive measure against unwanted school behaviour should also be acknowledged through the mainstreaming of peace education in the secondary school curriculum.

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NOTES